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THE LOGICAL BASIS OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE

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The significance of the woman suffrage movement is two-fold; it is a response to the general movement of democracy toward the individuation of all members of all previously subjected or submerged classes of society; and it is also a social response to the new demands of citizenship which have followed inevitably the new and varied increase in the functions of government.

The response to the general movement toward democracy has in less than one hundred years changed the condition of woman in the chief centers of so-called Christian civilization from that of "status" to that of "contract"; a complete change from that condition in which the married woman while her husband lived could neither hold property, make a business contract, receive wages in her own right for her own work even outside the home, acquire legal power over her own children, act as guardian for a minor child, her own or another's, or in any manner acquire the rights of an adult individual, under the law. During her marriage, she was, as a minor child, protected in some manner against "abuse" (of which in quantity and in quality men and not women were the judges), but in no sense invested with the rights of an independent adult person under the law or in social, educational or industrial citizenship.

It was, of course, inevitable that the doctrine of the rights of man should come at last to include the rights of woman, just as it was inevitable that the rights of white men should come at last to include the rights of black and yellow and brown men. The great eighteenth century struggle in human progress was for the recognition of what Charles Sumner called "That equality of rights which is the first of rights." It was for a scheme and practice of political organization which should deny special privileges to any, which should secure liberty and greater justice in all the relations of life to all the different classes of men than had before been known. Although the winning of such measure of democracy in

government as we have attained does not bring in the millenium, and has not yet been applied perfectly enough even to men to fully measure its influence for good, any student of history can challenge the most pessimistic observer of American life to furnish an example of any more aristocratic form of government which has resulted in as high an average of physical, mental and moral well-being for the majority of the people as even such a partial democracy as our own. Women, since Abigail Adams demanded of the framers of our Constitution some recognition of the rights of women in their deliberations, have seen that there is no argument that can be framed for equality before the law for all classes of men that does not also apply with equal force to both sexes. The woman suffrage movement, however, is only as old as the immortal Seneca Falls meeting of 1848. That was a "Woman's Rights Meeting," and only incidentally and with hesitation pledged to a demand for the ballot; its chief stress being laid upon higher education for women, better industrial conditions, more just professional opportunity for qualified women, and larger social freedom; together with a strong appeal for the legal right of adult women to have and to hold property and to secure that "contract power" that marks the dividing line between a responsible person and a child or an imbecile.

There are two arguments, and only two, that can possibly be brought against the application of the general principles of democracy to law-abiding and mentally competent women—one is that women are not human beings; the other that they are a kind of human beings so different from men that general principles of right and wrong proved expedient as a basis of action in the development of men do not apply to them.

I take it that this company would not subscribe the ancient belief that "women have neither souls nor minds" but are a "delusion and a snare," invented for practical purposes of life, but not to be counted in when the real life of humanity is under consideration. Are then women of such a different sort of humanity that they do not need individual protection under the law, do not require the mental and moral discipline of freedom and personal responsibility for the development of character, are justly and fully provided for through the political arrangements of men, by men and for men, and therefore should be forcibly restrained from complete citizenship? Some, many, seem thus to believe.

The fact that women as a sex, not the favored few of a privileged class, but women as a sex have suffered every form of exploitation at the hands of men and without redress until very recently (an incontestable and easily demonstrated fact, attested by every law book of all Christendom), is sufficient answer to that. The further fact that until women initiated and carried through a great struggle, which although bloodless and pacific on their part, lacked no element of martyrdom, no woman could learn anything but the most elementary scraps of knowledge or develop her vocational power or attain industrial opportunity of any sort commensurate with her needs, is further attestation that women are not so different from men that they can be educated without a chance to go to school, be able to protect themselves against prostitution or ignoble dependence through self-support without the legal right to earn their own living or the legal right to hold and manage their property. Women are not so different from men as to become strong in character without having the discipline of moral responsibility or become broad minded and socially serviceable without the opportunity to "learn by doing" the duty of a citizen. Men and women are different, but not so unlike that they can become fully developed human beings in circumstances totally different.

The political democracy fought for in the eighteenth century, and partially obtained, led inevitably to the educational democracy struggled for and partially obtained in the nineteenth century, and most strikingly illustrated in the American public school. The industrial democracy now striving toward realization must follow the sharing of political rights and duties and the educational preparation for good and wise citizenship which we have in such large measure already attained. Now the democratizing of the family and of the social life is an inevitable and more and more conscious demand in order that we may have a home in which real and not sham, full-orbed and not partial, democracy may be nurtured and developed. Unless women are made a vital and a responsible part of democracy in education, and democracy in political service, and democracy in industrial organization, they cannot bear and rear fit citizens for a genuine and a matured democratic State. Thus, unless you repudiate democracy, you must finally include in its range of social influence all classes and both sexes.

The second element of significance in the woman suffrage

movement is the social response to the new demands of citizenship made by the new type of State which has been developed in this latter stage of human progress. The family and the Church used to take care of education; industry used to be a personal concern of domestic handicraft. Now all the functions of social order have been differentiated and started on separate but inter-related careers. The Church is not now a legal power; the school has become a function of the State; the new industrial order has necessitated legal protection of the weak and ignorant against the strong and shrewd. The State has gradually, and in these later days with astonishing celerity, taken over not only education, but charity and constructive social effort toward the common welfare. A thousand details of truly spiritual activity, which once were held solely within the sphere of the domestic and religious life, are now concerns of Government.

What are the great functions of social service for which "human beings of the mother sex" have been held chiefly responsible since society began? The care, the nurture, the development of child-life; the care of the sick, the aged and the infirm; the relief of the unfortunate; the protection and care of the defective; the general ministry of strength to weakness. These are the functions that the modern State has taken over from the home and from the Church. These are the functions the modern State *cannot perform without the direct and varied aid of women*. These are the modern State activities that make the largest army of public employees the teachers, of which ninety per cent. are women; and the next largest army the caretakers of the sick and insane and unfortunate of every kind, of which at least three-fourths are women. "Yes," but the anti-suffragist says, "women should work as subordinates for society through State employment, but they should not become a part of the political power of control and supervision." Then, if that be so, women are degraded from their ancient position in the office of personal ministry; for women, under the old régime of education, had command of the training of all the girls and all the little boys; and under the old régime in charity not only did the work, but determined what that work should be.

Now at last, struck with this fact, the anti-suffragist has taken the monstrously grotesque position that women should fill *appoint-*

ive positions of supervision and even of control in education and philanthropy, but should never be voted for or vote even on the political side of these functions. But an office like that of judge or overseer of the poor, which in one State is "appointive," may be in another State "elective." The constant tendency in the United States is for private initiative to create models in the educational and in the philanthropic field, for the appointive powers of executive office and legislative bodies of a few States to adopt these new models as a part of the State provision through specially appointed commissioners or boards, and for other States finally to copy the new idea through the regular channels of elective procedure. In private education and philanthropy women are expected to bear more than their full share in support, control and activity. When the State takes over tentatively as an experiment, some private enterprise, then, say even some of the most conservative anti-suffragists, a governor, or mayor, might properly take over also a selected woman or two to manage the interest of education and charity thus absorbed.

When, however, the people take over the school for the blind, the custodial home for the idiot, the asylum for the insane, the children's home, the care of the poor, the establishment of the city playground, the manifold enlargements of the public school provision for our cosmopolitan population, at what point does it become unwomanly for women to retain charge of their own special and inherited business? Where does it become improper or useless or unnecessary for women to protect children and youth, and with power to determine the conditions surrounding sister women in reformatories and prisons, and to secure right care for the aged, infirm and unfortunate? No living human being can find that point. Thousands of students of the modern social order and its historical bases in more primitive social organization can prove to any unprejudiced mind that social harm has resulted whenever and wherever these new functions of charity, of education, of social control, of public amusement, and of social effort toward personal welfare, have been taken over by the State from the home and the Church and the domestic shop and factory, without taking over also some recognized power of control by expert women as well as the subordinate service of women in general.

If, then, women are human beings and not so unlike men as

to render all human experience useless in the matter of their character development, they, too, as well as men, must be sent to school to political duty and responsibility if they are to rightly serve as mothers and teachers of potential citizens of democratic States.

If, then, the State, as can be easily proved, has taken on in modern times functions of dynamic social influence in education, in charity, in protection and development of the personal life, thus undertaking the things which, from the foundation of society, have been peculiarly "woman's sphere," it is as absurd as it is unwise and socially harmful to deprive the State of the service of women in all capacities of both subordinate activity and trained supervision and control.

This all means on both these grounds that women must be given the duty and the responsibility as well as the protection and the power of the ballot in order that there may be established a free, recognized and obvious channel by which the value of women's contribution to the State may be conserved and effectively applied to social welfare.